

FORMS OF HYPOCRISY IN THE WRITINGS OF DAMBUDZO MARECHERA

by

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

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Abstract.

Perceiving every established notion as inherently entrapping, Dambudzo Marechera rejects and strives to elude all manner of categorisation which tends to submerge one's individuality. His fundamental conviction is that only those whose motive is to exercise power over other human beings insist on fixed notions such as nation, race, culture, religion and ideology. This is because such self-seekers realise that human beings tend to be more susceptible to manipulation if they identify themselves with established categories or discourses.

Given the trend in African writing during the anti-colonial period to identify with nationalist discourse, Marechera cuts the figure of a literary funambulist: not only does he refuse to write for a specific nation or race, but he also dismisses fixed notions of nation and race as spurious Machiavellian fabrications aimed at fossilising people's minds for purposes of easier regimentation. Predictably, Marechera invokes the wrath of nationalist critics who see in him a self-deprecating African reactionary or a mere Uncle Tom who affects European avant-gardism.

This thesis uses close textual reading to explore Marechera's combative engagement with what he perceives as hegemonic discourses which mask themselves in various deceptive forms. The central theme is Marechera's representation of hypocrisy. His commitment to a vision that transcends evanescent agendas such as political independence is a recurrent motif in this thesis. I also examine the ways in which he deploys complex metaphors and allegories to expose the workings of hypocrisy. Of equal interest is his motivation in deliberately sabotaging the rules of conventional grammar. I consider this in the light of the fact that to Marechera, English – his second language – is also the language of the metropole.

Opsomming

Omdat hy alle vooropgestelde idees as inherent beklemmend beskou, verwerp Dambudzo Marechera alle tipes van kategorisering wat die mens se individualiteit verswelg. Dit is sy fundamentele oortuiging dat slegs diegene met die motief om mag oor andere uit te oefen sulke vaste idees soos die van nasieskap, ras, kultuur, geloof en ideologie afdwing. Die rede hiervoor is dat sulke self-bevorderaars besef dat mense meer vatbaar is vir manipulasie indien hulle hulself met vasgestelde kategorieë of diskoerse identifiseer.

Gegee die neiging in Afrika-letterkunde van die anti-koloniale periode om met nasionalistiese diskoerse te identifiseer, neem Marechera die rol aan van 'n letterkundige draadloper: nie alleen weier hy om vir enige spesifieke nasie of ras te skryf nie, maar hy verwerp vasgestelde begrippe van nasie of ras as misleidende, Machiavelliaanse versinsels wat daarop gemik is om mense se gedagtelewens te verstar – met die doel om hulle makliker te regimenteer. Heel voorspelbaar haal Marechera homself hiermee die woede van nasionalistiese kritici op die hals – kritici wat hom of 'n self-neerhalende, reaksionêre Afrikaan of 'n blote 'Uncle Tom'-figuur beskou; een met Europese avant-gardistiese pretensies.

Hierdie tesis gebruik die metodiek van skerp tekstuele skrutinerings om Marechera se veglustige bemoeienis met (wat hy beskou as) hegemonistiese diskoerse, verskuil onder 'n verskeidenheid van misleidende vorme, te ondersoek.

Die sentrale tema is Marechera se voorstelling van huigelary. Sy verbondenheid tot 'n visie wat verbygaande agendas soos by voorbeeld politieke onafhanklikheid transendeer, is 'n herhalende tema van hierdie tesis. Ek ondersoek ook die maniere waarop hy komplekse metafore en allegorieë gebruik om die werking van huigelary aan die kaak te stel. Ewe belangrik is die motivering vir sy selfbewuste ondermyning van die reëls van konvensionele grammatika. Dit ondersoek ek in die lig van die feit dat vir Marechera Engels – sy tweede taal – ook die taal van die metropool is.

Dedication

To the memory of my parents, Esther Rutoro and Jonah Zinaka; my sister, Ediniah, and my friend, Edson Ashanti.

Also dedicated to my sister-in law, Alice; my siblings, Patrick, Edmos, Daniel, Enedy and Peter, as well as all our children,
with love.

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Title: Forms of hypocrisy in the writings of Dambudzo Marechera

Introduction

Hypocrisy is a central focus of Dambudzo Marechera's writings. This thesis examines the ways in which Marechera represents hypocrisy in relation to politics, race relations, religion and male violence during the colonial period. The 1996 *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines hypocrisy as 'the assumption or postulation of moral standards to which one's own behaviour does not conform; dissimulation, pretence'. In this thesis the term hypocrisy is used to refer to false pretences in the conduct of a person with ulterior designs which s/he wishes to fulfil through such deception. The different contexts in which this phenomenon may be recognised will illustrate that some forms of hypocrisy are malignant, whereas others are innocuous; some conscious and others unconscious.

Marechera's writings have generated a great deal of debate which has increased in intensity in the period following his death in 1987. Critical opinion has been very divided concerning the value of his work. Some - like Juliet Okonkwo and Mbulelo Mzamane, who are generally known as nationalist critics - censure Marechera for his narrative style, which they regard as alien to Africa. Okonkwo even considers Marechera's work an 'aberration' pernicious to Africa which 'cannot afford the luxury of such distorted and self-destructive "sophistication" from her writers' (Okonkwo, 91). Mzamane equally castigates Marechera, saying that 'his literary styles owe very little to the African tradition, and rob his work of a Zimbabwean authenticity' (Mzamane, 212). Evidently, nationalist critics put a high premium on a very particular version of the African identity - an issue whose implications form the basis of the first chapter of this thesis. To critics of this ilk, Marechera's embracing of 'European' literary ideas makes him an Uncle Tom, because he cannot join fellow Africans in the promotion of the African image.

Imbued with a commitment to socialist realism, black nationalist writers tended to blindly identify with anti-colonial struggles in Africa and proceeded to throw their weight behind newly established post-independence African regimes. Against this background, an African writer who shunned nationalist rhetoric was perceived as a reactionary. Esther Kantai, a Kenyan Heinemann book reviewer who sympathised with nationalist critics, lambasted Marechera's *The Black Insider* thus:

Marechera obviously sees nothing that is good. This is unfortunate in the sense that he comes from that part of the world where liberation wars are being waged... These stories are damaging to the morale of people bent on liberation.

(Quoted in *Dambudzo Marechera: A Source Book on His Life and Work*, 183)

There are, however, liberal critics who see Marechera's perceived unorthodoxy as a step in the right direction for 'African' literature. Among them is Daniela Volk who believes that 'National identities confine individuals to external definitions and closes (sic) other routes to self-discovery' (*Emerging Perspectives*, 302). Volk wonders why some critics fuss so much about Marechera's narrative style. She notes:

The world has produced many people like Marechera who celebrate difference and attempt to communicate across difference. A society which has no place for someone like him is a long way from being free and almost certainly is a long way from regarding its members as possessing equal rights. (*Emerging*, 311)

Grant Lilford observes that it has become a cliché for African critics 'to attack more experimental writers as depraved and modernist', just as 'Stalin and Hitler attacked experimental art, claiming it had alien origins [which] contributed to permissiveness and cynicism' (77). In other words, the paranoia displayed by nationalist critics about Marechera's style is actually symptomatic of tyranny – a scourge that has always plagued human society. And in the character of Plato banishing the poet from his ideal republic, Okonkwo seeks to exile Marechera from her ideal Africa.

For his part Marechera has no illusions about the road he chooses to follow. He is even conscious of the sway that ideologically partisan reviewers (like Kantai) can have over publishers. In *The Black Insider* the narrator alludes to such detractors:

The hidden persuaders are well dug in behind the ramparts and they know exactly how to stimulate that kind of phoneyess which a complacent reading public takes for its own good taste. (91)

Anthony Chennells argues that 'when people narrow themselves down to one obsession or one aspect of their identity, they have denied their complex humanity' (*Emerging*, 53). He notes that Marechera's 'protean selves affirm identity as process and therefore inherently unstable' (43) and writes:

if his black skin was wrong sometimes it was because he was expected as a black Zimbabwean to enact specific public roles, to promote particular sorts of scholarship as a black intellectual, and to write a particular sort of novel as a black novelist. (53-54)

Marechera's biographer- Flora Veit-Wild - quotes his response to suggestions that his narrative style is not reflective of his African (Zimbabwean) identity. Marechera says:

I think I am the doppelganger whom, until I appeared, African literature had not yet met. And in this sense I would question anyone calling me an African writer. Either you are a writer or you are not. If you write for a specific nation or a specific race, then fuck you. (Veit- Wild and Schade, 1988: 3)

Marechera proceeds to explain how 'the direct international experience of every single living entity' (3) acts as the 'inspiration' behind his writing. The vehemence underlying his response demonstrates that Marechera was stung by such criticism.

The current critical debates on Marechera are now reminiscent of nothing so much as the monotonous sound of an ancient record that is stuck on an equally ancient gramophone. There is so much zeal in categorising and describing his literary style that little attention is given to the fundamental issues that he explores in his writings. The burden of my thesis is to show that Marechera is concerned with exploring the motivations underlying human-behaviour and not at all with categorisations. In the *Source Book* he is quoted as saying: 'If you have developed emotionally and intellectually...it's not the colour of the person but the fire which makes them unique as an individual' (29). I will examine how, in Marechera's view, the phenomenon of hypocrisy tends to extinguish this 'fire' in humanity.

Marechera's commitment to individual freedom is so intense that he is acutely sensitive to any phenomenon that tends to cramp it. In 'The Writer's Grain' Mr Warthog – one of Marechera's chameleon versions of himself – lectures Andrew on the need '[t]o insist on your right to confound all who insist on regimenting human impulses according to theories psychological, religious, historical, philosophical, political, etc' (*The House of Hunger*, 122). Marechera's perception is that most people's minds are shaped by traditions or manipulated by self-seeking hypocrites who cunningly work their way into the collective psyche. Quite often, too, overt tyranny reduces individuals to mere shadows of their true selves. To Marechera, people tend not to realise how institutionalised thinking clouds their minds to the extent that they become unconscious hypocrites. Thus one of the concerns of this thesis is to show how Marechera's writings can make readers more critical and self-reflexive so that 'they will see how beautiful they are and see those impossibilities within themselves, emotionally and intellectually' (*Source*, 41).

To appreciate Marechera's analysis of the workings of hypocrisy one has to look closely at the different strategies that he deploys to depict this phenomenon. Ezenwa-Ohaeto (Achebe's biographer) quotes Achebe, who counsels strangers how to observe the Igbo traditional dance, the masquerade. He warns that 'if you want to see the masquerade, you don't stand in one place' (253). Similarly, if one wants to see the Marecheran masquerade, which is also an un-masking of hypocrisy, one has to keep shifting one's mental focus so as to realise that the seemingly incoherent narrative style is one of the strategies Marechera deploys to unmask the 'pretence, which he never seemed to stop finding in the environment' (*Source*, 168). Marechera believes that hypocrisy is a phenomenon that can easily elude detection by virtue of its tendency to change its form with changing situations. Thus, he adopts equally protean strategies in order to keep track of it.

This thesis comprises five chapters and the focus will be primarily on three of Marechera's texts: *The House of Hunger*, *The Black Insider* and *Mindblast*. Flora Veit-Wild's *Dambudzo Marechera: A Source Book on His Life and Work* and (eds) Flora Veit-Wild and Athony Chennells' *Emerging Perspectives on Dambudzo Marechera* are the two main secondary sources I refer to. For the sake of brevity, the texts will be referred to as *Source* and *Emerging* respectively.

In the first chapter I explore Marechera's depiction of political hypocrisy in Africa. The main focus is on the manipulation of what Marechera calls the African image. He lampoons black neo-colonialists' pretensions to cultural revival which have tended to be nothing more than a nebulous cloak for tyranny and material greed. He points out the atrocities perpetrated by tyrants like Amin and Bokassa as illustrations of independence gone wrong. I look at Marechera's portrayal of the way blind political dogmatism breeds false consciousness and spurious heroes as exemplified by the self-styled Pan-Africanist school bully, Stephen, in 'House of Hunger'. Marechera believes that individuals can develop critical and self-reflexive thought so that they can resist becoming slaves to institutionalised thinking. I will examine his view of cosmopolitan literature as a liberating force.

The second chapter looks at how Marechera portrays the deceptiveness of European civilisation as represented by his depiction of Ian Smith's Rhodesian colonial regime (in the country now named Zimbabwe) in 'House of Hunger'. Marechera shows how the racially motivated marginalisation of black people leads to the breakdown of family life and social values. I will explore his use of allegory to expose what he perceives as European colonial racism which tends to mask itself with pretensions to civilisation.

In the third chapter I look at Marechera's depiction of religious hypocrisy – a phenomenon which he discerns in the role played by missionaries during the colonisation of Africa. He shows how they perverted Christianity in order to rationalise colonialism. They preached 'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's' (*The House of Hunger*, 35). In the meantime, colonial flagpoles were being erected by European colonisers. With a leavening of humour and mockery, Marechera shows how blacks, too, appropriate Christianity to serve their own selfish ends. In 'House of Hunger' the black catechist, Harry's father, uses his position to further his sexual exploits: he goes about 'accusing women - those who repulsed his advances - of witchcraft and sorcery' (10).

The fourth chapter examines Marechera's portrayal of an innocuous form of hypocrisy involving African exiles in England. In *The Black Insider* he shows how the hardships of life in exile tend to destroy the exiles' spirit of camaraderie: everyone becomes phoney

and snobbish as a survival mechanism. In the process alienation grips them as they try to negotiate their exiled reality. I also look at Marechera's depiction of different superficial friendships that spring up amidst the exiles' sense of insecurity. Blacks coalesce into 'laagers' in fear of white racist attacks. At the Africa Centre in London, some blacks and whites try to create a 'test-tube Africa' (66) in which they imagine themselves beyond racial confines. Marechera shows that genuine non-racialism is not achieved but the two racial groups pretend otherwise. He examines the motivations and implications of such artificial relationships.

In the final chapter I explore Marechera's depiction of male violence under colonial conditions such as those existing in the Rhodesian setting of 'House of Hunger'. I examine the view that disempowered men turn to sexual violence against women as a desperate attempt to re-assert themselves. Children are also brutalised by their parents, as happens to the nine-year old narrator whose teeth are knocked out with a punch by his father. Another example is that of a man who beats up his wife and rapes her in front of a street crowd. I will consider the perception that colonised men who seek to humiliate their women sexually are indeed sick.

Marechera has been condemned by moral puritans for the use of language which is regarded as obscene; he has been accused of being obsessed with pornographic details. I will argue that such responses demonstrate the efficacy of his strategy of shocking people – particularly bourgeois readers who live in complacency and complicity with false social standards - out of their comfort zone of conventional responses and into a new sensibility.

The conclusion will briefly note the insights that can be drawn from Marechera's views on the theme of hypocrisy.

Chapter 1: Marechera's depiction of the hypocrisy underlying the appropriation of 'the African image.'

[A] chasm is exposed within the African image; our roots have become so many banners in the wind with no meaningful connection with the deep-seated voice in us. But they have at the same time strengthened their grip on us: a new kind of fascism based on the 'traditional' African image has arisen. (Marechera: *The Black Insider*, 82)

Let it [Negritude] stop telling the masses how beautiful they are while they are starving, while they swelter under new lords, while they stand outside State House or City Hall where their lords are junketing.

(Ezekiel Mphahlele: *The African Image*, 89)

In this chapter I will explore Marechera's depiction of political hypocrisy in Africa. Marechera's texts convey his judgement that some unscrupulous leaders appropriate what he refers to in the above quotation as the 'African image' in order to mask their tyranny. I use the term in the same way as does Marechera himself. It is a shorthand means of referring to those African virtues that have been stigmatised by European colonisers. Blackness had come to symbolise savagery, inferiority to whiteness, and shame. Early anti-colonial writers like Chinua Achebe were particularly outraged by colonial narratives such as Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Cary's *Mister Johnson* which, in their view, portrayed Africans as savages. In *Chinua Achebe: A Biography* Achebe is quoted as saying, 'Africans did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; their societies were not mindless ...they had dignity' (102). Thus, most anti-colonial writers who shared Achebe's sense of outrage set out to counter the colonial image of Africa. Hence the campaign to re-assert the dignity of Africanness. The celebration of blackness became the central feature of this campaign. The slogan 'Black is beautiful' captures the spirit of the movement, echoing the sentiments of Negritude (Mphahlele, 25) as well as the tenets of Pan-Africanism. Pan-Africanism 'articulated

pan-African solidarity, demanded an end to white supremacy and imperialist domination and positively celebrated blackness' (Ania Loomba, 211).

I will cite different incidents from Marechera's texts (*The House of Hunger*, *The Black Insider* and *Mindblast*) that illustrate the author's perception of the hypocrisy that underlies the appropriation of the African image. In 'House of Hunger' the self-styled Pan-Africanist school bully, Stephen, beats up a younger and weaker boy called Edmund so severely that the latter has to be rushed to hospital for surgery. The narrator, who is also Edmund's friend, describes how he finds him 'on his hands in a pool of blood. His face was unrecognisable' (66). He adds that doctors 'wired his jaw. They used a lot of stitches to save something of that crushed-in face. Yards of stitches' (66). Stephen is portrayed as a blatant bully who 'genuinely loathed Edmund' (63): he is unashamedly happy finally to have found a pretext to victimise him. Apparently Stephen begrudges Edmund the latter's interest in Russian writers such as Dostoyevsky, Pushkin and Gogol. In Stephen's view, this literature has no relevance to African culture. The narrator describes how Stephen becomes 'an avid reader of the Heinemann African Writers Series' and 'appropriated for his own specific use such notable figures as Nkrumah, Kaunda...Stalin, Mao, Kennedy and Nyerere...' (63). Stephen 'thought Gogol was the one great enemy of Africa who had to be stamped out at all cost' (63). It is ironic that Stephen is so paranoid about Gogol whilst in his own list there are figures like Stalin, Mao and Kennedy who are of different - if not opposing - ideologies (socialism, communism and capitalism).

In the above incident Marechera shows how Stephen's attack on Edmund exemplifies his brutal and blind bigotry. By declaring that 'Africa always rises up to every new challenge, as Nkrumah said. Even the challenge of immorality...' (65), he attempts to mask his intolerance with pretensions to the lofty ideal of playing the role of Africa's moral policeman. The quotation of Nkrumah here is just a cunning affectation of sophisticated ideological consciousness. Stephen is attempting to enthrone himself as the cultural tsar of Africa and arrogates to himself the authority to censor what fellow Africans read. Marechera is depicting how bigots tend to handle the ideological differences that they perceive as existing between themselves and other people. Stephen represents Pan-Africanists who presume to prescribe to others what African culture is and how it should be protected from foreign influence. Marechera also

parodies the simplistic reasoning of petty tyrants like Stephen. To Stephen, the sight of Edmund's 'crushed-in' face symbolises the notion that Gogol's ideas have been successfully 'stamped out' of Africa. His simplistic logic is that by physically crushing one's ideological opponent, one succeeds in crushing their beliefs. Stephen evidently has never read Gogol if he assumes his ideas to be anti-democratic or pro-capitalist. But despite his lack of knowledge he uses physical force to suppress what he perceives as his ideological opponent. His attitude shows that 'censorship results from an irrational fear of contamination' (*The Black Insider*, 95).

To Marechera Stephen's claim that 'Africa always rises up to every new challenge' smacks of hypocrisy. The brutalisation of Edmund has nothing to do with the upholding of Africa's moral integrity. He is merely obfuscating the issue by reference to a personified ideal. The truth of the matter is simply that, as the narrator says, 'Stephen genuinely loathed Edmund' (63). The African image is hijacked to suit tyrannical whims. Here Marechera finds the concept of the African image vulnerable to manipulation by self-aggrandising hypocrites: the unidimensional celebration of blackness creates loopholes for a simplistic interpretation in which whatever is black (African) passes as morally impeccable. In this text, individuals who embrace a cosmopolitan vision of the world get marginalised because they are perceived as a threat to African culture. Thus, because Edmund enjoys reading Russian literature, Stephen finds this a convenient opening to victimise him under the guise of defending the African image.

The Stephen-Edmund incident can also be read on two metaphorical levels - literary and political. Through Stephen's paranoid attitude towards Gogol, Marechera satirises African writers and critics who regard European literary ideas as anathema. In a lecture at the University of Zimbabwe in 1986, Marechera said 'I do not pigeon-hole it [Literature] by race, or language or nation....I do not consider influences pernicious' (*Source Book*, 362-63). One can recognise a strong resemblance between Marechera himself and the persona he creates in the character of Edmund. Marechera's view is that by limiting oneself to African literature - especially the anti-colonial genre - one's outlook is impoverished. This is demonstrated by Stephen's affected attachment to the Heinemann African Writers Series (which is supposedly revolutionary writing) - 'affected' because his inclusion of Kennedy in his own reading list shows that his notion of 'African' writing is rather confused. Marechera prefers - and urges - readers to extend

their vision beyond protest literature. One way of doing this is to read works whose themes transcend the narrow bounds of present space and time. Dostoyevsky, Pushkin and Gogol are among the writers whose works Marechera regards as highly inspiring because of his sense of their lasting value and their ability to consider ideas and social realities not limited to their authors' Russian circumstances. As the narrator in *The Black Insider* says:

I have found in nineteenth century Russian literature an empathy with the breath and experience of Africa... And yet we write as though Pushkin, Turgenev, Gogol, Tolstoy, Chekov, Lermontov never existed. (83)

Stephen can be seen as a metaphorical representation of a typical fascist post-independence African ruler. Such a ruler will ruthlessly purge his opponents and critics on the pretext of their being a threat to African culture. In *The Black Insider* Marechera portrays Idi Amin as a more menacing version of the character represented by Stephen in 'House of Hunger' because Amin butchers fellow Africans with impunity. Marechera's narrator in *The Black Insider* laments the scenario in Uganda: '...we raise the African image to fly in the face of the wind and cannot see the actually living blacks having their heads smashed open with hammers in Kampala' (84).

The question that intrigues Marechera is: Why do people in post-independence African countries not seem to notice the excesses of their tyrannical leaders? He believes this has to do with mindsets: there seems to him to be a popular tendency to assume that the end of white colonial rule signals the end of bureaucratic oppression. And this perception seems to be encouraged by leaders during the period of liberation struggles. During this period, leaders indoctrinate the masses into seeing nothing beyond the day that the new national flag is hoisted. The emphasis is laid on the removal of the white man from power. With the coming of independence, people get intoxicated with this newly found freedom and take no notice of the infringement of human rights in their 'new' country. When formerly oppressed people finally get the opportunity to celebrate their blackness, they usually get so carried away that dictators capitalise on that state of euphoria. Blackness is elevated to the status of a mystique, thus rendering people vulnerable to psychological manipulation. This is one of the ways in which the African image is appropriated by tyrants.

Marechera suggests that after conditioning the masses to wallow in the celebration of their black identity, the tyrant embarks on a campaign to eliminate his opponents in the name of cultural revolution. By the time it becomes common knowledge that the new country has fallen into the hands of a dictator, it is usually too late for any meaningful engagement with the tyrant. Conscious of such possibilities, Marechera says through his narrator in *The Black Insider*, '[T]o play their game to the grimy end of definitions and counter-definitions of Africanness requires a zest and stamina I do not have' (75). Marechera seeks to alert people to the dangers of submerging their identity in a morass of unexamined beliefs. If they do so they render themselves vulnerable to manipulation by self-seeking hypocrites.

The OAU affords numerous examples of political hypocrisy that Marechera finds fascinating to examine. The members appear to invoke the African image only when they can derive selfish benefit from doing so. In *The Black Insider* Marechera's narrator observes how the organisation sits idle whilst Africa is being turned into a 'Tower of Babel' (85) by some of the continent's dictators. In Zaire, the totalitarian regime (of Mobutu) gives part of Zaire to Germany for the latter's nuclear test programmes. Meanwhile, it is 'bringing in Foreign Legionnaires to squash the lives of the poor' (85). In the Central African Republic, Bokassa crowns himself 'emperor in the Napoleonic style'. And in Uganda, 'Amin's atrocities have made all the atrocities everywhere else respectable' (85).

In Marechera's view, African dictators get away with gross human violations because they take advantage of the nebulous nature of the African image. Since there is no universally accepted interpretation of the notion, anyone in power can implement their own version of the African image. Amin can also argue that the atrocities committed by his regime are actually measures he is forced to adopt – severe as they may seem – because of the peculiarities of the Ugandan situation in the course of a necessary 'cultural revolution'. Marechera's view is that whilst the African image campaign started off as a legitimate phenomenon, it became tainted when politicians joined the campaign because they started perverting it into a political tool. The campaign's inherent flaw is that it naively assumes that everything (and everyone) black is beautiful. As a result, its vision is limited to the removal of white domination in Africa. And so the OAU finds itself

incapable of handling the scourge of black fascist excesses. Thus, the narrator in *The Black Insider* dismisses the organisation as 'the maintenance man of the black ancient regimes and not the instigator and protector of the people's liberties' (85).

Marechera's interest in the fuzziness of the African image as a concept is also connected to his fascination with the nature of language. He believes that language is inherently deceptive to the user in that it can create in one's mind illusions of power and consciousness. In *The Black Insider*, Marechera draws interesting parallels between language and water: 'Language is like water. You can drink it. You can swim in it. You can drown in it...You can evaporate and become invisible in it' (34). Politicians often get away with empty rhetoric, by simply playing around with hollow words. They sugar-coat their words, and the masses in their audience walk away with the impression that all is well and that they are in control of their destiny. But in reality no fundamental transformation occurs in their lives. Mphahlele makes a point similar to Marechera's when he notes how leaders deceive the masses by telling them 'how beautiful they are' whilst 'they stand outside State House or City Hall where their lords are junketing' (89). One finds striking resonances in these comments with the post-independence South African scenario where a great deal of talk has been generated by nebulous concepts such as 'the rainbow nation' and the 'African renaissance' – at best, perhaps, newer versions of the 'the African image'. Marechera seeks to warn people that if they accept political rhetoric at face value they expose themselves to manipulation by wily political demagogues.

One of the dimensions of hypocrisy that Marechera finds interesting is the manner in which it flourishes in society. In his view, there are instances where the selfish nature of humanity abets hypocrisy. In *The Black Insider* Marechera shows how such selfishness manifests itself in the OAU and in the lives of the African exiles who live in London. The narrator describes how:

there was the prismatic effect of listening to a tall withered black South African talking about how Kaunda had returned to Smith a hundred and twenty-nine of our guerrillas in exchange for fifty million bags of maize and how he arrested SWAPO exiles and sent them to Nyerere who jailed

them for ten years. But we agreed that such things should not be publicised because it was in our interest to appear united. (66)

Here Marechera portrays political hypocrisy operating on two levels. Firstly, the OAU turns a blind eye while Kaunda and Nyerere betray the Zimbabwean and Namibian freedom fighters. The questions are: if pan-African solidarity aims at ridding Africa of European colonialism, how can the OAU sit idle whilst its members collude with the colonial regimes that are oppressing their fellow Africans? If 'brother cannot keep brother' then where is the solidarity out of which blackness will be celebrated? By betraying the Zimbabwean and Namibian guerrillas, the OAU, along with Kaunda and Nyerere, exposes the ideal of African unity for the sham that it has become. To take another example; one can consider the role of the exiles in London: they discover the OAU treachery, but they decide to hush it up so as 'to appear united' (66). This is a double hypocrisy. Their agreement to sweep the truth under the carpet implies the endorsement and support of hypocrisy. This shows that both the OAU and the exiles operate on the 'honour among thieves' ethic. Reflecting on the ramification of violence into every social arena of a patriarchal dictatorship, Nuruddin Farah observes that subjugated women also 'exercise power over people who are weaker than them', thus establishing a 'hierarchy of violence' (*Cape Times*, 20 August 1999). Similarly, one can say that Marechera exposes the 'hierarchy of hypocrisy' that characterises the relationship between the OAU and its member countries as well as within the exile community in London. Marechera's perception is that the pretensions to African unity demonstrate that the African image 'is no longer worth the snot it quotes' (*The Black Insider*, 84).

In exploring the psychology underlying the above conspiracy of silence, Marechera finds that humanity tends to be selfish. When everything seems to be proceeding smoothly in the liberation struggle, everyone claims to be in solidarity with the guerrillas. But when disaster overtakes them, everybody gets cold feet, reducing the whole talk about the African image to an empty shell. Marechera draws on the experience of the Nazi Holocaust to illustrate that selfishness and hypocrisy are not confined to Africans - rather they are universal forms of human failure. In *The Black Insider* Marechera's narrator wonders:

[H]ow come all the German citizens turned a blind eye to the millions who were being gassed and roasted among them...they could not see the concentration camp in the mirror...they couldn't see exactly what they were doing to a Jew's testicles. (84)

The point here is that, quite often, nasty things flourish in society because people tend to blind-eye issues that have no obvious or direct bearing on their personal comfort. The OAU does not intervene to rescue the Zimbabwean and Namibian guerrillas because none of the organisation's executives are at risk. The Germans pretended not to see the Jewish pogrom because their lives were not threatened. Marechera's narrator in *The Black Insider* laments the inertia shown by the African world when a fellow African desperately needs a show of solidarity: 'Ngugi is in jail, eating his grain of wheat. And here we are drinking tea...' (82). Which shows that the African image is paid mere lip-service.

In *Mindblast* Marechera satirises the Shona ruling elite in post-independence Zimbabwe. He perceives them as forming a hypocritical bureaucracy, out to enrich themselves at the expense of the masses. The leaders are portrayed as ruthless schemers who try to deceive the masses by spear-heading a spurious cultural (Shona) revolution. As a matter of fact, the larger part of the population is Shona-speaking. And now the bureaucracy insists that writers produce their works in the Shona language and/or translate them into Shona. Grimknife relates his ordeal to Buddy:

[T]he Department wants me to translate the whole thing into Shona. Either I do it or I get fired. I told them I would think about it but they fired me on the spot. And without pay. (59)

What Marechera is exposing in this case are the machinations of a hypocritical elite that pretends an interest in promoting and celebrating a supposed Shona identity. The hidden agenda - in Marechera's view - is to win over the hearts of the Shona people so as to build a secure political support base in the Shona community. Marechera is sceptical about such bureaucratic interest in promoting the African (in this case, Shona) image. In *The Source Book*, Marechera says; 'When politicians talk about culture, one

had better pack one's rucksack and run, because it means the beginning of unofficial censorship' (39). Indeed, Grimknife is unceremoniously fired from his job for not demonstrating sufficient enthusiasm in 'promoting' the Shona image.

Marechera is also examining the psychology of tyranny and notices that tyrants are particularly swift in trying to silence any potential threat from critical or analytical quarters, especially when they are faced with individuals who see through their pretensions. As his narrator in *The Black Insider* observes: 'A host of men and women of ideas contrary to the game of actually seeing the emperor's clothes have always been and are being persecuted' (53). Marechera's concern is what I have referred to above as the conspiracy of silence. Most of the time, oppressed people opt to endorse bureaucratic posturings as if they are not conscious of that hypocrisy. Marechera's ultimate fear is that tyrants can also brainwash society to a point where the masses join in the persecution of individuals who show any sense of independent thinking. Through his narrator he notes that 'Everywhere society demands that the illusion of the clothes be observed even though everyone, including the emperor or field marshal, knows that this is mere pretence' (*The Black Insider*, 53).

Marechera examines a more overt demonstration of bureaucratic ruthlessness practised by the Zimbabwean leaders, particularly when their double standards are publicly challenged by enlightened citizens. In 'The Toilet' in *Mindblast* Alfie captures such a scenario:

You say you are hungry, and the shef peers over his three chins down at you and says Comrade, you're the backbone of the revolution...And you try to say 'Shef (sic), I don't want to be the backbone, I want to be the big belly of the struggle against neo-colonialism like the one you got there underneath that Castro beard'. And before you even finish what you are saying, he's got the CIO and the police and you are being marched to the interrogation barracks. (38)

Using humour and mimicry, Marechera effectively illustrates that hypocritical leaders do not always succeed in pulling wool over everyone's eyes: slogans do not appease a hungry man, especially when he has realised that the leaders are practising double standards. The swiftness with which the shef gets rid of the hungry citizen demonstrates

the paranoia that leaders have about individuals who cannot be manipulated.

Marechera's point here is that tyranny and hypocrisy are intricately linked phenomena: it is almost a universal *modus operandi* for dictators that where deception fails to elicit support, violence becomes the next and last resort. In the latter case, the idea is to dismantle the truth that resides in the critical individual.

Like Ayi Kwei Armah, Marechera demonstrates how rampant bureaucratic corruption and greedy western materialism in a post-independence African country can easily reduce the African image to no more than a farce. He illustrates this inter-textually through his narrator in *The Black Insider* who says: 'Ayi Kwei Armah in his *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* not only stripped the African image of its clothes but also forced it to undergo a baptism of shit' (82).

What I would call the discursive thread in the above argument is Marechera's view that the African image campaign was a relatively legitimate phenomenon until politicians appeared on the scene. In other words, the appropriation of the phenomenon by political hypocrites is accountable for the stigma that goes with the African image today. This scenario could have been different (Marechera believes) if African writing and criticism had not 'consisted largely of solidarity rhetoric [blindly] supporting post-independence regimes' (Gaylard, 221). Marechera's perspective is that as long as people readily accept vague but established notions such as the African image, they are being mentally raped. He regards identity as a fluid phenomenon which keeps changing in response to one's constantly evolving consciousness. In view of this, no form of identity can be decreed by any authority outside the individual's consciousness. He says through his character in *The Black Insider*:

The idea of personality moulded by the cultural artifacts outside us and the sense of identity with a specific time and place, as though the human being is as rooted in his own kind of soil as a weed is what creates for us the emperor's new clothes. (81)

Chapter 2. Marechera's exploration of 'the white man's burden in Africa' slogan as a façade for material greed and racism.

[C]olonialism, that great principle which put anyone not white in the wrong ... you put others into a false position of inferiority. Equate whiteness with good and, of course, blackness becomes always tainted... Think of the psychological snarl-ups!

(Marechera, *The Black Insider* 79)

I don't apologise for what happened... We were trying to develop standards, to develop the black man gradually... If we had been allowed to continue, we would have succeeded.

(Ian Smith in the *Mail and Guardian*, 26 March 1999)

The first quote encapsulates Marechera's perception of the factors underlying colonial European determination to keep black people in an inferior position. Smith, the former prime minister of colonial Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) maintains that European colonial rule was established in good faith; the white man was obliged to take up his burden in Africa – 'to develop the black man'. This chapter considers Marechera's attempts to show that on the contrary, colonialism was (and is) motivated by material greed and justified by the fallacious notion that blacks are inherently inferior to whites.

In 'House of Hunger' Marechera, by showing the racist ethos of colonial rule in Rhodesia in action, exposes the hypocrisy and dishonesty of European civilisation. He graphically portrays the horrific living conditions in the townships to which black people are relegated by the Smith regime. On the other hand, the white population leads affluent lives in comfortable suburbs. In *Mindblast* he portrays how institutionalised racism tends to create skewed mindsets in some whites, making them paranoid about racial equality in post- independence Zimbabwe. Though the instances to be cited in this argument are set in colonial Rhodesia and post- independence Zimbabwe, this does not suggest that Marechera's sensibilities are circumscribed to that country. Rather, he uses that country as a microcosmic representation of black experience which he perceives on a macrocosmic scale. As he points out through his narrator in *The Black Insider*, Marechera is perturbed by the 'knowledge of a world that had rapidly

ceased to be ours and had become a whiteman's playground ... good living, and casual tormenting of Caliban' (105) Here, Marechera is drawing on the Shakespearean Prospero-Caliban relationship depicted in *The Tempest* as a metaphor for colonialism. 'Caliban' is used as an archetypal representation of colonised blacks in Africa and elsewhere.

Marechera depicts the duplicitous manoeuvres which were employed by early European colonisers to swindle mineral resources from the unsuspecting African leaders. He parodies King Lobengula (in what is present-day Zimbabwe) getting duped by Rudd into unwittingly ceding vast expanses of mineral-rich land to Cecil Rhodes's British South Africa Company ('House of Hunger', 43). The naïve African king only discovers when it is too late that he has been defrauded and is now signatory to the Rudd Concession. The narrator recounts how Lobengula expresses bafflement upon catching up with the rumour that he 'signed away the mineral rights of [his] country to Rudd' (43). Says Lobengula:

They asked me for a place to dig gold and said they would give me certain things for the right to do so...A document was written and presented to me for signature. I asked what it contained and was told that in it were my words and the words of those men. I put my hand to it. About three months afterwards, I heard from other sources that I had given, by that document, the right to all the minerals in my country. (42)

The sly cunning demonstrated by Rudd in the above incident points to the fact that European colonisers were prepared to employ all manner of treachery in order to wrest control of the wealth in Africa from Africans. As such the claim about coming 'to develop the black man' is shown to be hypocritical.

As Marechera exposes the machinations of the colonisers, he simultaneously criticises preliterate societies for their inadequacy in situations where evidence is needed to support claims made in protracted dealings such as those between Lobengula and Rudd. If Lobengula were literate, Rudd would not have deceived him the way he did. In other words, Marechera is saying that in today's world, a society that relies on the spoken word for evidence is making itself vulnerable to predatory ones. At the same time, colonised people should be critical when they read colonial narratives because the

latter tend to be written from a conquistadorial perspective that confines heroism to Europeans and allocates the villainy and savagery to the colonised people in Africa. The narrator questions the authenticity of the colonial version of the Lobengula-Rudd encounter; '[I]s this all there is to our history? There is a stinking deceit at the heart of it...where are the bloody heroes?' (43). To Marechera, such critical engagement with colonial narratives can help colonised people to identify aspects of their history that have been distorted.

Marechera does not always foreground the tyranny and hypocrisy of the colonial regime in 'House of Hunger'. However, the pervasiveness of these phenomena manifests itself in the behaviour of the oppressed blacks. For instance, the narrator says; '[M]y sixth form like other sixths rushed out into the streets to protest about the discriminatory wage-structure and I got arrested like everybody else for a few hours' (2). On the surface, the event is like a passing breeze that one soon forgets about. It is this type of deceptive casualness that Marechera sometimes adopts that makes his writings superficially apolitical. In this case the wage issue is only the tip of the ice-berg. He uses the student demonstration to signal the deep-seated and volatile political situation in colonial Rhodesia.

In 'House of Hunger' racial oppression of blacks spreads into all arenas of life, but in subtle ways. The narrator constantly alludes to the menace of oppression that haunts black people as in the following excerpts: 'We knew that before us lay another vast emptiness where appetite for things living was at best wolfish' (3), 'stars which glittered vaguely upon the stench of our lives. Gut-rot, that was what one steadily became' (4), 'the stench of our decaying family life with its perpetual head-aches of gut-rot and soul-sickness' (7), 'the thing that held the House of Hunger in a stinking grip' (9), and 'the stinking-public lavatory' (11) — the latter a recurrent image in the social life of blacks in colonial Rhodesia.

The images used by the narrator in the above paragraph illustrate the intensity with which the harsh realities ever present in black lives impact on them psychologically. And yet, the colonial regime that is responsible for these horrors is hardly mentioned. It remains a silent presence. What Marechera seeks to convey here are the elusive forms

that racism can adopt at times: its victims may feel the hurt it causes them, but they may not always be able to place their finger on it. That is why the Rhodesian colonisers pretend innocence in the face of the blacks whom they are oppressing. For instance in *The Black Insider*, Smith feigns complete bafflement at the supposed simplicity of black people's minds. In an attempt to disguise his racist mindset, he wonders before Pat:

For twelve years I have shouted 'Not In My Life Time' and tortured them and strung them up on gallows and starved them and kicked them too when they were down...I do not understand them. Either they do not have normal feelings or their insides are iron and flint. (40)

Marechera employs various evocative images to depict the sordid conditions in which blacks are living in the township in 'House of Hunger': he mentions 'grim squalor' (12), and 'grimy rooms' (3), and he adds that 'a cloud of flies from a nearby public toilet was humming Handel's Hallelujah Chorus' (10-11). The image of the flies can be read metaphorically as Marechera's way of subverting Christianity which has 'hallelujah choruses'. He perceives Christian missionaries as hypocrites who pretend piety whilst acting in cahoots with colonisers. The narrator recalls a 'racist but benevolent priest' (34) who adopted Harry's father from the streets and then turned him into an over-zealous preacher who would relentlessly 'denounce all African customs' (35) at every turn. The stink from the lavatory can be taken to symbolise Christian teachings that turn out to be hypocritical in view of the missionary collusion with the colonial regime. The humming flies represent the missionaries who sing 'Onward Christian Soldiers' (43) whilst European colonisers invade Africa, plundering its wealth.

Marechera portrays the hypocrisy of the colonial regime of Rhodesia. It institutionalises racism in order to close all economic avenues to blacks so that the latter live in depressing poverty. Well aware that blacks live in penury, white business assails them with advertisements: 'skin-lightening creams, afro wigs, vaseline, Benson and Hedges' (23). Two issues come to the fore here. Firstly, these advertisements are calculated to infuse a sense of inferiority in black people: beauty is associated with whiteness, hence the skin-lightening creams that urge blacks to scrub themselves white and look 'beautiful'. This is racial prejudice of a malicious character because it can create a pathological self-hate akin to the condition described in 'Black Skin What Mask'. Secondly, by dangling western consumerist goods before poor blacks, the regime is

deliberately frustrating them. This is also callous and hypocritical because it is evident that blacks will not find the money to buy such products as long as the racist policies that economically emasculate them remain in force. This means that the idea behind all these advertisements is to remind blacks that good living is reserved for whites.

In the poem 'The Coin of Moonshine' (*Mindblast*) Marechera also portrays the hypocrisy and callous insensitivity of tormenting the oppressed poor by inviting them to join in the splendour of western consumerism despite the fact that the latter's poverty is evident:

Hunger in the belly
 Rose to the brain
 Its bright eyes clenched
 In anger to smite with white – hot steel
 The reinforced glass between my want
 And your plenty. ...

Exhorting the homeless to bank with Beverley
 Exhorting the thirsty to have a Coke and a smile
 Exhorting the ill- educated to take a correspondence
 Course in Self-Confidence.

The above poem can be summarised as 'good living and the tormenting of Caliban' (*The Black Insider*, 112). To encourage people who are economically marginalised to open bank accounts is to be cynical, callous and inconsiderate – in short, deeply hypocritical.

The old man's allegory in 'House of Hunger' is another metaphorical depiction of the way in which colonial racism bars blacks from the full benefits of industrialisation. The old man tells the narrator how one man was prompted by 'a strange thirst. An unknown hunger. Which had driven him from himself, from his friends, from his family' (79) to wander 'under the sun' (80) until he saw a great city that attracted him from a distance. Says the old man (the allegorist): 'He came to a great city, but when he tried to enter, the guard at the gates laughed a great laugh and the whole thing faded into nothing but sand-dunes' (80). The guard represents the privileged whites and the racist barriers that

are designed to keep blacks away from 'good living' (*The Black Insider*, 105). However, the idea is that the excluded blacks should not go so far away that they fail to see and watch whites lavishing the benefits of industrialisation on themselves. Implicit here is the idea that the exhibition is for the blacks' 'education' - so that they do not forget that being born black is tantamount to carrying a curse that only goes away at death. Marechera finds it an act of hypocrisy that the colonial regime whets black people's appetite for 'things white' (78) whilst denying them fair opportunities in a world that needs money. To him, this malice is motivated by racism. He describes how black women are 'bombarded daily by a TV network ' and 'mugged every day by magazines' (50) that glorify western consumerism and 'Western' aesthetic standards.

The point Marechera is making is that though colonisers purport to be concerned with developing black people, their actions are evidence to the contrary. The South African intellectual William Makgoba aptly echoes Marechera's sentiment as he suggests: 'Colonialism is not about advancing the welfare of the indigents, but about exploiting them for the benefit of the colonists. It is crude, brutal, inhuman and inherently racist' (1997:2).

Marechera's narrator refers to 'the stench of our decaying family life with its perpetual head-aches and soul-sickness' ('House of Hunger', 7): 'I knew my father only as a character who occasionally screwed mother and who paid the rent, beat me up, and was cuckolded on the sly by various persons' (77). This scenario exemplifies the kind of family breakdown wrought by colonialism. In the old man's allegory the protagonist is driven from himself, from his family and friends. His sense of alienation is exacerbated by the fact that he is denied entry into the city. Metaphorically, Marechera is addressing the issue that has haunted most Africans who have been exposed to both African and European cultures: their dilemma is the inability to fit into either of the two. Some have opted for a hybrid approach whilst others - like Marechera - have remained 'exiles' to both worlds. Others become cultural schizophrenics. Whichever way, the impact of colonialism on the African social fabric has had its casualties: this means that colonialism has created a new breed of cultural hypocrites and schizophrenics in Africa. The narrator in *Black Sunlight* describes his position thus: 'Europe was in my head, crammed together with Africa' (3).

In 'House of Hunger' Marechera pays special attention to the psychological implications of the deprivations suffered by the oppressed blacks. The colonial regime deceives black parents into believing that they can escape from the tyranny of poverty if they give their children a good education. Women in particular make ultimate sacrifices - even resorting to prostitution - to educate their children. The narrator says of his mother: 'She was a hard worker in screwing, running a home' (78) and with time, her health begins to fail her. The narrator observes that '[h]er face was long and haggard, scarred by the many sacrifices she had taken on our behalf' (8-9). However, her efforts come to nought because her son - though he has been to university - does not get a job. Seeing that his mother is consumed by disillusionment, the narrator's elder brother, Peter, bluntly reveals to her that she has been a victim of colonial hypocrisy: 'All you did was starve yourself to send this shit to school while Smith made sure that the education he got was exactly what made him like this' (9). This shows that colonisers thrive on shameless hypocrisy and ironically, they are successful in deceiving some Africans into believing that they have the good of Africans at heart.

On the other hand, not all people are duped by colonial hypocrites. In 'House of Hunger' Marechera shows that the younger generation - particularly students - can no longer be deceived like their parents: they are more politically conscious and radical in their desire for change. It is the sixth formers whose role in the wage-structure protest is highlighted in the story. It is also the sixth formers who attack the over-zealous preacher when he starts to insult African traditions (despite being African himself). Harry's father, the preacher, has been so brainwashed by white missionaries that he sees nothing respectable about African people any more. The narrator's friend, Philip, captures the mood of defiance gripping the younger generation in his poetry which the former says is full of 'discontent, disillusionment, outrage' (58). Philip himself reflects on the pervasive gloom created by the colonial condition:

There's dirt and shit and urine and blood and smashed brains. There's
dust and fleas and bloody whites and dogs trained to bite black people
in the arse... There's technology to drop on your head wherever you stop.

(58)

The narrator in *The Black Insider* observes that

South Africa and Rhodesia were always full of whites with dogs. You could really see how a whiteman's dog was even more rabidly racist than the whiteman himself. (96)

In the above texts Marechera mocks European colonisers' hypocrisy: they presume to be civilised, yet, apart from imposing their rule on other nations (not to mention their plunder of resources), they subjugate colonised people by crudely violent means or by the constant threat of refined barbarity in the form of nuclear bombs, hence the 'technology to drop on your head' image. In addition, colonisers abuse dogs by training them to 'bite black people's arse' (in the event that they protest against colonial rule?).

Of greater significance in the above-mentioned quote is the manner in which Marechera uses language. He employs deliberately outrageous formulations as a way of shocking the oppressors out of their pretentious bourgeois gentility. The language is imbued with a revolutionary tempo - a way of identifying with the ordinary, oppressed underclass who have neither time nor use for genteel language. This is Marechera's strategy to demonstrate that language can be turned into a tool to subvert the dominant discourse - in this case, European colonial tyranny. In *Source* he is quoted as saying that as an African, he finds English a racist language, but that he intends to strip it of its decorum, as a self-empowering strategy. To him, this involves

brutalising it [English] into a more malleable shape for my own purposes
...discarding grammar, throwing syntax out...developing torture chambers
of irony and sarcasm (4).

Marechera portrays how institutionalised racism tends to warp the psyche of some white people in 'House of Hunger'. When the narrator and his friend, Philip, walk into one white-owned coffee-shop, the narrator 'rapped on the counter with a coin' (56). The proprietor, a white pensioner, responds rudely by racially abusing them. He tells them: 'Kaffirs at the back. Kaffirs...' (56). To Marechera, this old man's supercilious behaviour exemplifies selfish bullying that masks itself in the parlance of racial privilege: this too is a form of hypocrisy.

In 'The Gap' in *Mindblast* Marechera depicts the trauma that grips white racial bigots in post-independence Zimbabwe. Spotty cannot come to terms with the reality of relating to blacks as equals in a society that has outlawed racial hierarchies of the colonial era. Instead of inter-mingling with 'kaffirs' he decides to emigrate to 'more civilised pastures' (23) - apparently referring to (then) apartheid South Africa. But he wants to blow up his house before leaving. In a fit of fury, he tells Dick:

I'm not going to leave my possessions for some kaffir Comrade to fiddle with. And that includes the house. They are my possessions. It was my money which bought them. Money from the sweat of my brow. All right, from the sweat of my kaffirs' brows. (23)

What Marechera portrays through Spotty's mindset is that if one has been benefiting from the skewed social structures of a racialised society, one's psyche tends to get so distorted that one cannot adapt to a normal society where all people are regarded as equal. To Spotty, civilisation obtains when the law sanctions him and his ilk to torment blacks the way Caliban is tormented by Prospero, hence his impulsive idea of emigrating to apartheid South Africa. Marechera shows how much the legacy of racial privilege can hamper efforts towards building a non-racial society in post-independence societies. One can view Marechera's writings as an attempt to urge his readers to liberate themselves from thinking of their fellow human beings only in terms of narrow racial categories. It is when people relate to each other along racial lines that the monster of hypocrisy has the opportunity to rear its head in human relationships. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said says:

The difficulty with theories of essentialism and exclusiveness, or with barriers and sides, is that they give rise to polarisations that absolve and forgive ignorance and demagoguery more than they enable knowledge. (35)

Said echoes Marechera's vision regarding hidebound discourses. Just as he rejects the celebration of blackness because its insularity stifles the individual's free thinking, Marechera equally sees whiteness as an unnecessarily dichotomising obsession. To him both blackness and whiteness need to be deconstructed as they essentially dwell on hypocritical assumptions that condition people to 'think in straight lines' and 'go

where a straight line goes and to look over the shoulder to where straight lines come from' (*The Black Insider*, 37).

In *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon diagnoses a psychic sickness whereby '[t]he white man is sealed in his whiteness' and similarly, '[t]he black man in his blackness' (11). Marechera's view is that individuals who are conditioned into such racial essentialisms are like 'morons who sometimes do not exceed the mental capability of a normal child of four or five' (*The Black Insider*, 87). He likens the fate of racially obsessed individuals to that of dinosaurs:

I have always felt sorry for the dinosaur whose special modifications, when the climate changed from wet to dry, made them unable to fit in with the new dry and arid conditions and they became extinct. (*The Black Insider*, 87).

Thus Marechera feels that the individual who is incapable of transcending a rigid and outdated mindset turns his racial identity into an article of faith – suffering an unnecessary burden in this globalised age where identities are at best, fluid. And refusing to live with such an overwhelming reality is tantamount to swimming against a flooded river.

In 'The Toilet' in *Mindblast* Drake throws a party that brings together both black and white guests at his house – one of the signs of the new non-racial society in the early days of post-independence Zimbabwe. The six anonymous white male guests consider it an affront to share toilet facilities with their black counterparts, worse still, to be kept waiting for a turn to use the toilet by a 'kaffir' (41). When Shogun, a black guest, comes out of the toilet, the six white men gang up to pounce on him, accusing him of '[t]rying to make fun of the white man' (41) by keeping them waiting to get into the toilet. To them, Shogun has been too presumptuous to forget his place as a 'kaffir' in the scheme of things. And as they beat him up, one of the assailants exhorts his colleagues : 'let's make him shit himself twice over' (41).

Marechera uses the above incident to show how difficult it is for those with racist mindsets – like the dinosaur - to adapt to changed realities around them. Their violence is symptomatic of a deep-seated sense of insecurity in the face of change. In a way, they are desperately trying to turn back the hands of time. As David Caute says: 'The fury of the privileged, when threatened, always exceeds the anger of the underprivileged when demanding a measure of equity' (1983: 241).

Chapter 3: Marechera's portrayal of religious hypocrisy.

The European raped, pillaged, and exploited our people with two instruments: the bible and the gun. He walked into our lands holding up his book of religion but behind it he was toting a full and ready musket.

(Caryl Phillips, *Higher Ground* 76)

The first people to come and relate to blacks in a human way were the missionaries. They were in the vanguard of the colonisation movement to 'civilise and educate' the savages and to introduce the Christian message to them.

(Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like* 93)

In both of the above quotations Christianity is seen as the forerunner for colonisation, preparing the way for the subsequent exploitation of the subject countries' natural resources and their indigenous peoples. This chapter explores Marechera's perception of European missionaries in the context of the colonisation of Africa. It also considers his portrayal of the way some Africans appropriate Christianity to further their selfish political agendas or as a means to gain sexual gratification. It could be said, then, that Marechera examines these forms of Christianity as forms of hypocrisy.

Marechera uses Harry's father, the fanatical African priest in 'House of Hunger', to depict the workings of religious hypocrisy which he perceives in European missionary acts of supposed benevolence towards Africans. The narrator describes how Harry's father 'started life just like any other half-starved homeless vagrant' (34) whose life took a dramatic turn after '[a] "lucky" chance - an encounter with a racist but benevolent white priest' (34) who fostered him, enabling him to get an education - by obtaining a Standard Six certificate. And 'soon afterwards [he] became a deacon, and then a priest. What more could a man want?' (35). Paying tribute to his missionary benefactors, the over-zealous priest says during a sermon to the sixth form students who include the

narrator: 'I was a homeless orphan without shelter, without food, without a father, without a mother, without brothers or sisters, without the comfort of friends. There was a great void in my heart' (36).

The point Marechera seeks to illustrate in the above incident is the insidiousness of European missionary hypocrisy in the targeting of deprived young Africans for superficial acts of benevolence, hence the word 'lucky' is in inverted commas. This is to indicate that the first encounter between Harry's father as a young man and the white priest was in fact an unfortunate occurrence. What the poverty-stricken young African assumed to be Christian charity was actually a pre-meditated snare; he was the unsuspecting quarry and the 'lucky' encounter was the beginning of his mental colonisation. Missionaries systematically indoctrinate such Africans in their formative years into perceiving anything African as a symbol of backwardness and savagery, whereas anything European (especially colonialism) becomes a synonym for civilisation and progress. This indoctrination causes the alienation of the African from his birth-right of beliefs and value systems. A subliminal self-hate tends to grow in the victim, and with time, this develops into a form of pathology. With a leavening of humour, Marechera exposes the destructive behaviour of the over-zealous African priest:

[F]rom chimney to pulpit he began to denounce all African customs; from desk to dustbin he carted all manner of filthy traditions which in reality were the only strengths still in the minds of his own people. (35)

One can read the story of Harry's father's life as a parable for the workings of colonialism. Colonists rely on local missionaries to carry out a form of mental colonisation which only they could attempt. In other words, Marechera perceives missionaries and colonists as two sides of the same coin. In fact, the former are more lethal in that they work their way into the individual's psyche in a manner so subtle that the individual hardly realises that s/he is being brainwashed. Marechera fears psychic subjugation more than physical oppression because to him, the individual's most precious possession is a free mind, one that is unsullied by 'brain operations' (*The Black Insider*, 51). Only a free mind can effectively resist 'cerebral rape' (51).

Harry's father lectures the narrator and his classmates (the sixth formers) on what he believes to be African people's indebtedness to European colonists. He declares: '[Y]ou

had nothing but the ape-man in you...And the white man came. Look around you. Surely the industry and progress..." (35). Evidently, the missionary 'brain operation' on this African has been a success: now he is parroting his masters' theme - telling fellow Africans that when the white man arrived in Africa, the continent was crawling with savages and it was all darkness. His missionary 'education' has convinced him that the white man's coming to Africa was a blessing for Africans because the latter would otherwise have remained wearing 'the ape-grin in [their] brains' (35). Aidan Campbell observes that '[i]n the heydays of the imperial mission to civilise Africa, Africans were generally denounced as tribal savages' (1997: 9). It is significant that words like 'colonisation' have been edited (subconsciously?) from the preacher's vocabulary. This is because he cannot realise that he is rationalising colonisation on behalf of his masters. To Marechera, the priest's mind is manipulated by missionaries who work in league with colonisers. This means that missionary claims to being first and foremost committed to spreading the Word of God are a pack of lies. As Lilford says '[T]he church has been complicit in the destruction of African tradition and in the mental colonisation of the continent [Africa]' (198).

Marechera shows that missionaries pervert religion by consciously colluding with the colonial regime in Rhodesia. The above preacher's visits to the narrator's school cannot be dismissed as an act in isolation: Rhodesia is in a state of political volatility and the narrator and his fellow sixth formers take to the streets to show solidarity with the oppressed workers who are subjected to a 'discriminatory wage-structure' (2). This means that the students are a politically conscious group. One of the strategies of the regime is to co-opt radicals into 'the halls of government' (35). And that is the point at which the missionaries step in: they provide their 'cerebral rape' victim -Harry's father- to carry out the task of mellowing such revolutionary students. Aware of the radicalism characterising the student mood, the preacher begins his oration: 'Humility is the gateway to the halls of government...Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's...loyalty rather than insurrection is the supreme Christian virtue' (35).

The above incident demonstrates how hypocrites appropriate Christian doctrines for reasons of political expediency. The missionary protégé seeks to legitimate colonialism. Going by his logic, the 'Caesar' in question is Ian Smith, the colonial prime minister of Rhodesia. What belongs to this particular Caesar is the money in the form of wages.

Which suggests that the students err by participating in the 'insurrection' over the racialised wage-structure. Evidently, this priest is on a political mission - not a religious one. He even urges the students not to hunger for 'the things of this world' but to worry about 'the coming of a greater reality' (36). Marechera perceives missionaries as hypocrites because they try to persuade Africans to worry themselves about 'the coming greater reality'. In the meantime, European colonists will themselves be amassing the 'things of this world'. And by equating colonial leaders like Smith with the biblical Caesar, the intention is to create a form of divine mystique around them. The underlying motive is to deceive oppressed Africans into believing that colonialism is a divine scheme which should not be violated. This perversion of Christianity is what leads Marechera to regard missionaries in the same light as colonisers.

Though Marechera depicts religious hypocrisy as a pervasive phenomenon, he shows that not everyone is necessarily duped by pretensions to piety. The sixth form students realise that Harry's father is disguising a political theme with a religious mask. They turn riotous - attacking him physically and hurling a torrent of repudiating 'catcalls, hoots, howls' (36) at him:

'Bloody missionaries!'
 "Bloody whites!"
 'They had the Bible!'
 'We had the land!'
 'Now they have the land!'
 'And we have the Bible!'
 'Bloody sell-outs!' (36)

The above 'catcalls' illustrate that if people learn to be critical, they can avoid the danger of getting brainwashed by hypocrites. These students can discern the web of conspiracy between missionaries and colonists: missionaries were 'in the vanguard of the colonisation movement' (Biko 93), masquerading as messengers of God whilst paving the way for their brothers - the colonists. Many Africans were deceived by the superficial piety, only to sober up when it was too late: they had been swindled of their land and its resources. Marechera portrays missionaries as duplicitous in that they work hand in glove with colonisers. To him these two prop each other up in such a way that colonised people are sandwiched between them. In 'House of Hunger' he expresses his frustration through his character, Philip; '[I]f we can't do ourselves in properly, there's

congregations of missionaries...to do it and they have on their side cops and soldiers' (59). The fact that missionaries act in concert with forces of colonial oppression makes manifest why Marechera portrays the former as hypocrites - they purport to be messengers of God whilst they actively abet the subjugation of colonised peoples.

In *The Black Insider* Marechera satirises the cunning of Bishop Muzorewa, prime minister of neo-colonial Rhodesia, who desperately tries to hold together a shaky, discredited regime that is threatened by liberation movements operating from Zambia and Mozambique. Marechera employs mimicry to portray the role of the beleaguered bishop as the latter tries to convince the cynical Marota about the legitimacy of their supposedly Christian government.

Bishop: What are you worrying about? I am black and you are black but do I know whether your soul is with the devil or with God? These who strike at the heart of God's country have renounced religion. They are communists. Devils. That is why I have agreed to let our troops attack the Zambian bases.

Marota: You carry your God too high above the trees. The people cannot see him. All they see is the smoke and shrapnel of their own kind being killed at your orders.

Bishop: The people are not Godless. This is the mistake you hot-heads always make. (39)

In the above conversation Marechera portrays the bishop's pretensions to religious piety as a ploy to legitimate his political ambitions. At every turn, the bishop invokes God's name, hoping to pass himself off as a God-fearing leader. In the process he tries to undermine the credibility of the liberation movements by implying that they are not waging war against him, but against 'God's country', and as such, the guerrillas are 'communists' and 'devils'. Interestingly, when he endorses an attack on Zambia, he wants Marota to believe that the attack is justifiable because the targets are 'devils'. The lack of Christian charity in the bishop's presumption to judge his political opponents shows that he is merely trying to disguise his political agenda with a religious cloak. But such masks are not always effective: Marota sees through the bishop's pretences and challenges him to consider the implications of his military orders that lead to so much carnage among the very people he claims to defend against 'devils'. Here Marechera shows that sometimes people become unconscious hypocrites in their blind pursuit of selfish motives.

Marechera notices how greed for power can tempt people to appropriate religion as a tool with which to further their ambitions. Reflecting on the ubiquity of this phenomenon in post-independence society, the narrator in *The Black Insider* laments: 'Bible people have taken over from the colonial administrator, taken over the supervision of the African mind... You find them everywhere; in industry, in agriculture, in the bedroom, and in the toilet' (97). The point in Marechera's view is that with the end of European colonial oppression, one would have expected African leaders to promote a culture of free-thinking. On the contrary, they manipulate the minds of African masses, using religion just as missionaries were doing on behalf of their colleagues – the colonists. This amounts to a double hypocrisy in that not only are the new leaders betraying the democratic ideals that should replace colonial oppression, but they are replicating colonial pretensions to religious piety for the sake of exercising power over fellow Africans.

Marechera seldom misses the opportunity to spice his writings with humour. He depicts the bizarre lengths to which people can go with hypocrisy. In 'House of Hunger' Harry's father (the over-zealous priest) is portrayed as such a character. Behind the mask of a fundamentalist 'born-again' Christian that he wears, there is an incorrigible adulterer. The narrator says that he goes about 'accusing women - those who repulsed his advances - of witchcraft and sorcery' (10). This priest evidently abuses his position in the church to further his sexual exploits. Yet when he preaches to the sixth form students, he self-righteously chastises them for thirsting 'for things of this world' (36). Again, when his daughter Immaculate falls pregnant, he 'became like a fierce bull' (35), chasing her from the family home. But in his sermon to the form six students, he counsels humility. His inability to match his own words with deeds manifests the hypocrite in him.

Another ludicrous instance of religious hypocrisy involves an unnamed nun who is attached to the narrator's boarding school. She gets involved in a sexual liaison with Jet, an infamous philanderer. The scandalous relationship is discovered and Jet is fired from his post as assistant boarding master (62). The point, however, is that the nun has broken her vow of sexual abstinence. Before the scandal becomes known she has no qualms about exhibiting false modesty. People who make a show of religious piety,

often tend to use religion as no more than a guise for nefarious and selfish pursuits. However, it takes an enlightened observer to see through many of these pretensions because they are capable of assuming insidious forms as exemplified by the missionary-colonist collusion.

Chapter 4: Marechera's depiction of the relationship between hypocrisy and the hardships of exile

Exile in London is so demoralizing. You're all changed...everyone looks phoney and suspicious and cynical and there's no black feeling among us anymore...We stand each to each like cities beyond repair. Shelley's Ozymandias has really come among us.

(Marechera, *The Black Insider* 62)

This chapter looks at how Marechera conveys his perception of innocuous forms of hypocrisy that were apparent in the inter-personal relationships of African exiles living in England particularly in the late-70s. This period witnessed an upsurge in British right-wing politics, with Enoch Powell's National Front inflaming racist sentiment against black people. Marechera's narrator in *The Black Insider* says it was a time when even 'newspapers carried the most hysterical nonsense about blacks' (77), and that it had become common to 'read about blacks being beaten up by the National Front and the police, who were also attacking black business premises' (77). All textual references in this chapter are from *The Black Insider*, unless otherwise stated.

Marechera shows how increasing racism in Britain forces African exiles to form 'a black laager against the hordes of white natives' (65). The significant thing about this 'laager' is that it is not only a superficial coalescence, but that the exiles themselves are well aware that it is nothing more than a desperate survival mechanism. As the narrator observes, 'we were all...people drawn together by the likeness of our skin and no more' (64). Such groupings were not formed spontaneously and the members kept to the 'laager' only for the sake of personal security. Once the threat of racial attacks is removed, the 'laager' suffers a natural death. Marechera considers this a form of innocuous hypocrisy. The exiles are forced by circumstances into such groups and do not act out of sinister motives. These laagers are ironic in the sense that their members continue to feel insecure despite the presence of other blacks. As the narrator observes: '[L]ittle teeth of uneasiness always gnawed at our self-assurance for there is no answer to a whiteman's sneer' (65).

The impecunious circumstances of most exiles is the cause of a profound crisis of values. Nyasha angrily points out to the narrator: 'You all don't come on like you used to do back home...What's happened to us? What's happening to blacks here in London?' (62). Nyasha is not alone in his bewilderment because the narrator himself has already noticed that existential hardships are forcing most exiles to 'individualise themselves so much that even the sour comradeship that's still there really leaves a reek of sewage disposal systems' (62). In other words, exiles are now so preoccupied with personal survival that they can no longer afford to practise the generosity they normally did 'back home'. What interests Marechera is the fact that whilst African exiles no longer help each other in times of need, they continue to affect comradeship. The narrator bitterly recalls experiencing such hypocrisy:

I didn't want to go to any of the other blacks I knew were in London. It's one thing to be comrades against whites and it's totally another thing to be penniless; the comrades would be suddenly struck by amnesia as far as knowing you went. (58)

In the above quote Marechera exposes the double standards practised by the exiles: they affect vibrant camaraderie when they condemn white people for colonial tyranny. However, when one of the fellow comrades is in need of help – particularly where money is involved - they grow cold feet. The comradeship does not extend beyond lip-service, when financial sacrifices are called for.

When the narrator is forced to leave London because 'things were somewhat rough' (59) he decides to go to his former girlfriend, Patricia, in Aberystwyth. To him, the decision is quite logical because 'You were the only connection I had with the past and what is happening now' (60). Patricia is infuriated by his sudden appearance: 'You can't just bosh up things like you did at Oxford and expect me to pick up the pieces' (60). But her supposed fury dramatically mellows into cheerful hospitality as soon as she learns that apparently, her returned boyfriend has a substantial amount of money because his publishers have just paid him. Ecstatic about the money news, Patricia unceremoniously dismisses her new boyfriend, Roget: 'Go away now' (60).

Patricia's seemingly erratic mood swings are typical of the behaviour patterns that arise out of the anxieties that haunt many of the exiles in England. She adopts an ostensibly callous attitude towards someone so close to her because she cannot cope with the financial implications of hosting a 'parasite'. As she says, 'There are too many things to do without that [love] coming in' (60). However, her swift change of mood shows that she has learnt to play-act for the sake of survival. From a rude 'I need picking myself', Patricia switches to flattery: 'I knew you would make it. You've so many words inside your head like a sort of writing sausage machine' (60). Such fickleness, to Marechera, manifests the hypocrisy of self-interest.

In the space of one paragraph the narrator Marechera portrays the narrator's fleeting moods. He positively responds to Patricia's welcome: 'Already I could feel the disappointment melting away' (60). But in no time, that peace of mind is replaced by a melancholy cloud. He says, 'There was nothing out there or inside me which I could see was the wire between the life inside me and the actual geography of living' (61). Here Marechera points to the pervasive sense of alienation that haunts the exiles. By depicting his narrator's psychological agony, Marechera shows profound empathy with his fellow African exiles. It is out of this empathy that he seeks to portray Patricia's hypocrisy as innocuous.

Whilst the narrator and his friend Nyasha are drinking at the Africa Centre, the former decides to buy some beer for both of them. But Nyasha takes offence and accuses him of patronising him: 'You think I'm just an idiot dazed by the lights of London. You think you can put me in my place by acting the nabob on me' (68). Ironically, it is Nyasha himself who has been expressing regret over the perceived lack of 'black feeling' (generosity?) among the African exiles. He accuses others of being 'suspicious and cynical' (62), but that is precisely what his attitude towards the narrator amounts to. Marechera presents this self-contradiction in Nyasha to illustrate that hypocrisy tends to creep into the individual's psyche by stealth: Nyasha does not realise that he is being blatantly hypocritical in accusing other exiles of the very attitudes he is himself manifesting.

In his self-righteousness, Nyasha makes a stinging attack on the narrator, 'almost shouting' (68) so loudly that ' [a]ll conversation had ceased in the whole room' (68).

Says the apoplectic Nyasha:

Your brother was right about you. You're unbelievably selfish and vain and a fucking shit...All these five years you never wrote back home...All you think about is yourself all the time and using black people as material for your disgusting stories. You're filth, you know that?' (68)

Earlier Nyasha confesses to the narrator that he is trapped in an unhappy marriage which is characterised by 'row after row' (61) and as a result, 'it's getting me down' (62). He lectures the narrator on family values, but he himself has very little respect for his own wife who is with him in exile: he does not feel guilty about undermining her integrity by gossiping about her with his friend, the narrator, who refers to her as 'the millstone' (61). Evidently Nyasha has a low opinion of his nursing wife and says of her, 'She doesn't understand a thing about art. Or books. Just blood and wounds and bedpans and screwing' (62). The character of Nyasha is presented as an exile who is so weighed down by psychological pressures that he is desperate to find an emotional outlet. And when the narrator comes along, he becomes a convenient target for Nyasha to vent his spleen. The underlying issue here is that '[b]ehind every door lurks disillusionment' (62): what the exiles share in common is a sense of alienation. Marechera calls it the 'tearing cloth of exile' (61).

Because of the hardships that batter them psychologically, exiles tend to experience a sense of emptiness in their lives. It is the nagging consciousness of this void that leads Nyasha into 'crying silently on to his shirtfront' (69) soon after giving the narrator a vitriolic dressing down in the pub. His crying is an admission that he is being presumptuous to pass judgement on his friend when he himself is equally selfish: he mourns that he 'can't get used to the reins' (62) of marriage, yet it is all a result of his own actions. What he avoids saying is that he created a responsibility that now exacerbates the financial (and consequently psychological) burden of life in exile. These 'millstone[s]' (61) cause him much frustration which he must purge, otherwise he will suffer a nervous breakdown.

It would, however, be a misrepresentation to read the seemingly inconsistent and self-contradictory behaviour of exiles as mere selfishness. To Marechera, this 'tearing cloth' is a complex phenomenon in that one is forced by circumstances - sometimes quite unconsciously - to adopt false poses for the sake of survival in the hostile environment of exile. As such this amounts to innocuous hypocrisy. The narrator shows that Nyasha's conduct is typical in exhibiting this play-acting tendency despite his readiness to blame others for being phoney. He recounts that the first meeting with his formerly close friend, Nyasha, after a five-year communication breakdown, amounted to their 'sizing each other up' (63), which illustrates that during the intervening period both of them had grown to be 'suspicious and cynical' (62). Says the narrator:

Emigres in a racially colour-conscious country, artificiality came quite easily to both of us. We were talking in English, feeling like hippopotami that have been doped with injections of English culture. (63)

The observation Marechera is making here is that the hardships of life in exile tend to unhinge most exiles' sense of reality so much that they unwittingly turn into hypocrites. Nyasha can afford to act an Englishman by talking in English with the narrator (English is second language to both of them) without finding it unnatural, because it suits him. But when the narrator buys him beer, Nyasha reads patronisation into that gesture, telling his friend: 'You've become a hypocrite too' (67). This accusation is ironic in that the narrator is equally 'no longer sure how to behave towards him after all these five years' (68). The cynicism and paranoia which Nyasha manifests reflects the fact that – as the narrator says - '[t]he road had been so long and so arduous that it had subtracted us from ourselves' (65). The trauma that is caused by the 'tearing cloth of exile' (61) tends to undermine genuine attempts to reach out to each other because suffering has reduced most of the exiles to 'half-invisible phantasm[s]' (65). This is the psychic damage of exile that particularly perturbs Marechera. Through his narrator, he says: 'My greatest disappointment...[was that] one never [got] the chance to give, and give unreservedly' (64). Marechera finds it regrettable that the experience of exile tends to leave its victims too psychologically scarred to be able to distinguish between the rhythm of genuine human affection and hypocrisy. In other words, like rape victims, exile is so traumatic that its victims may not be able to recover completely. This focus on the impact wrought on the psyche by exile demonstrates not only Marechera's depth

of insight into human psychology, but also his vision regarding the (unique at that time) need for post-exile counselling.

Marechera's interest in the workings of hypocrisy stems from the perception that if the phenomenon is not exposed (and writing about it is one way of doing so), people get so accustomed to play-acting that they cease to realise that they reduce themselves to ridiculous 'half-invisible phantasm[s]' (65) that are 'all surface, with no depth underneath' (79).

The absurd behaviour of African exiles who gather at the Africa Centre in London 'where everybody else seems to have mastered the art of maintaining poise' (67) is portrayed with comic skill. The narrator adopts the persona of an almost god-like, independent observer by detaching himself from the 'laager' and watches how people conduct themselves. In one direction he sees how 'a few blacks' (66) are endeavouring to look smug and patriotic in 'national costume' (66). Turning to another direction, he sees 'little groups of black and white faces' busy 'talking and drinking in an unmistakeably non-racial way' (66). What interests Marechera here is the fact that these people are keen on superficial appearances: uppermost in the minds of the few blacks donning their 'national costume' is the idea of being seen to be asserting their national identities in a racist England, as if they are not concerned that they might actually provoke racist attacks. The narrator notes that the exiles are 'eating impeccably African food recommended by the *Guardian*' (66). How ironic that African exiles who purport to be so conscious of their Africanness should rely on a British newspaper for guidance on 'African' menus. And this is where the whole point lies: if the exiles are sure of their identity, there is no need for them to seek validation of that identity from a British newspaper (and by implication, the British people), who in the first place, are historically responsible for stripping them of their subjectivity. In the 'non-racial' group Marechera sees a mere theatrical gang of buffoons (comprising bogus white liberals who are patronising sychophantic blacks, who, in turn, are pleading to have their humanity affirmed by whites). Both racial sides are aware (at least subconsciously) that theirs is not a relationship of equals, hence the 'strange obsequious assertiveness' (65) that is reflected by the blacks. The reality which both sides are pretending does not exist, is that it is the white man who calls the tune whether it is back in the empire or in the metropole. And this reality will not be altered by 'non-racial' posturings that are confined

to the four walls of the Africa Centre. Speaking through his narrator, Marechera says, 'I could see how wretched our position was' (65) because '[w]hatever we did would always be scraggy at the seams' (63).

Marechera's view is that exiles tend to develop delusions of their own grandeur by virtue of their living in exile. The narrator feels that living in exile creates a chasm in terms of consciousness between the exiles and the people whom they have left back home. To him exile tends to alienate people from their origins. As such, the African exiles are 'no longer knowing the poverty and degradation which had flung us up like waves from the masses of the sea...a new kind of decadence had caught up with us' (63). He adds that whilst living in exile, Africans immerse themselves in 'Graeco-Roman thinking which has had nothing to do with the barren townships we had come from' (63). And bound up with this 'Graeco-Roman thinking' is the English language that they have adopted, resulting in a form of cultural alienation. This has implications for post-exile life when the exiles return to their original homes.

Marechera foresees a conflict of values between former exiles and the society to which they will return after independence. Because whilst people who never left the country have a sense of rootedness, to the returning exiles, who have 'travelled widely in Europe' (77), the question is: 'Why stress ...rootedness[?]' (79). After years of exile, individuals develop a form of anchorlessness: 'There is no sense of home any more, no feeling of being at one with any specific portion of the earth' (79).

Marechera questions the authenticity of exiles' claim to be speaking with the voices of the masses. To him, the physical distance between exiles and the people back home is metaphorically equal to their differences in vision. Conscious of this chasm, the narrator says:

I caught myself thinking how can we and the likes of us ever presume to lead the multitudes out there, thousands of miles away who day by day eke out a sordid existence, from the bullets and the toil? (63)

Marechera here shows misgivings about the suitability of exiles to lead people who remain in the country, facing 'the bullets' from the colonial forces whilst the exiles are

'sitting there in that Bloomsbury pub talking about the ennui' (63) and 'listen[ing] to the siren's promise of English pleasures!' (63). In 'House of Hunger' Marechera raises the same concern. Philip angrily tells his friend, the main protagonist: 'There's a lot of these bastards hanging around in London waiting for independence to come back and become cabinet ministers' (*The House of Hunger*, 59). Marechera is anxious that whilst exiles are 'hanging around in London' they lose touch with the aspirations of the masses back home, the 'workers – themselves whom I did not feel we had any qualifications to lead in anything' (*The Black Insider*, 105). Marechera is thus suggesting an element of distinct hypocrisy in formerly exiled leaders' claims to 'represent' their suffering, oppressed people – if the gap in their respective experience is so wide.

Chapter 5. Marechera's depiction of the hypocrisy underlying the violence of colonised men.

[T]he tacit agreement among the men was that the only way to treat the wife was to beat her up occasionally, and this sometimes became a spectacle for men. A little domestic argument in the house, and the man would drag the woman out of the house into the yard ...and really beat her up out there, calling out to all the men to come and witness it.

(Marechera, quoted in *An Articulate Anger* 27)

Marechera perceives the black male violence against women and children in the society portrayed in 'House of Hunger' as a manifestation of a kind of hypocrisy underlying the behaviour of racially emasculated men: the violent men feel (subconsciously) the need to assert their masculinity and the obvious victims are the women they can subjugate and humiliate sexually and the children whom they can abuse.

In 'House of Hunger' Peter is very bitter and vindictive on his return from jail because he believes he has been unjustly treated and thus humiliated by the colonial regime. Haunted by his impotence against white power, he walks about 'raging and spoiling for a fight' (2) in the black township. The narrator, who is his younger brother, describes how, on the slightest pretext, Peter fights with a ferociousness that 'terrifie[s] everyone so that no one in their right mind dare[s] to cross him' (2). And he continuously swears at the 'bloody whites' (2) as he looks for fights in the black community.

Peter is an example of those colonised men who, rather than engage with their white oppressors, turn on their fellow blacks who are equally hemmed in by the same regime. His attitude is both ludicrous and ironic. Ludicrous, because he curses the 'bloody whites' knowing full well that they will not hear him (they do not live in the black townships anyway). Ironic, because he does not realise that by terrorising fellow blacks, he becomes an unwitting accomplice of white power in the brutalisation of his own people. Thus, in his attempt to buttress his dented ego, he consolidates the very system that is responsible for humiliating him and turning him into such a bitter individual. Such ironies interest Marechera because he notices that colonised men usually do not realise that their unwillingness to examine their own motives helps to perpetuate their colonial subjugation. Instead of admitting their fear of the colonial monolith which has

disfranchised them, such men seek to be tyrants in their own community by bullying those who are not responsible for their emasculation.

Peter subjects his girlfriend, Immaculate, to relentless and savage beatings from the day she comes to live with him and his family after she has fallen pregnant by him. Immaculate becomes the unfortunate victim of Peter's violence. As the narrator says, Peter 'finally beat her until she was just a red stain' (4). Peter knows that Immaculate has nothing to do with the humiliation he suffers as a result of his just-ended imprisonment, but he continues to brutalise her just the same.

Marechera shows that such pretensions to machismo flourish despite the fact that the victims can see through the actions of those who bully them. Peter is incensed by Immaculate's 'raw courage in her wide animal-like eyes'(4). She despises Peter because she recognises that he is using her as substitute for those upon whom (if he were truly heroic) he should be avenging himself. And it is this defiance that increases Peter's frustration because he knows that he cannot force her to capitulate. In desperation, he tries to threaten her; 'I'll beat it out of you yet' (4) - but she remains defiant and dares him: 'Go on, then!' (4).

Women who suffer male abuse in colonised societies are usually aware that the assaults they suffer are as a substitute. They know that such men are, in fact, cowards who are too scared to face their colonisers. Marechera believes that patriarchal legacies play a significant role in maintaining the phenomenon of male violence. As his 'House of Hunger' narrator says; 'The older generation... believed that if one did not beat up one's wife it meant that one did not love her at all' (49-50). This ancient misperception of brutality as love tends to create an ambience for hypocritical bullies like Peter to tyrannise women under the guise of maintaining African culture. In this sense, Marechera's writing can be read as a deconstructive unstitching of distorted patriarchal notions of love. In terms of this thesis, Marechera is experiencing a profound and poisonous form of social hypocrisy which masks selfish brutality as 'love' or a passion. Thus reading Marechera's writings could help to educate people - particularly in societies that marginalise women - to adopt a more critical approach towards culturally sanctioned, abusive behaviour.

Marechera recognises an intriguing connection between poverty and the violence which black men in 'House of Hunger' direct against women and children. He uses a nine-

year old narrator's personal ordeal to depict the ugliness of the forms which such 'displaced' violence is capable of assuming. The narrator excitedly bursts into the house from school, eager to tell his mother something of interest. She takes offence at his speaking to her in English and proceeds to hit him. He is so upset that, 'with a great childish violence' (14), he tears up all his English exercise books and leaves the house. On his return, he finds that his father has returned. Upon being told about the incident, the father's reaction is startlingly violent. He punches the little boy in the face. Says the narrator:

The blow knocked my front teeth out...He was rubbing his knuckles thoughtfully and looking down at me like a cockroach in a delicatessen ...he punched and I fell back onto the exercise books. Staining them with blood. (14)

The senselessness of this father's violence is shown by the glaring incongruity between his little son's supposed offence and the punishment meted out. The reader's sympathy is elicited for the defenceless child who is bewildered by his father's viciousness. Considering the narrator's consistent reference to his home as the house of hunger throughout the narrative, one can conclude that the father is psychologically tyrannised by poverty. The narrator says: 'I knew that [my father] was despised because... he always wore khaki overalls, even on Sundays' (77). It is the tendency to vent one's spleen on innocent victims that Marechera finds fascinating. Rather than face the colonial regime that economically emasculates him, this man turns on his small son. Thus, poverty has a way of turning people into irrational family bullies. As these men yield to violence, they are unaware of the enormous gulf between the real causes of their anger and the cause implied by their actions. This gulf amounts to a pernicious form of hypocrisy.

In the above incident the little boy becomes the ultimate victim of the kind of violence that is beyond his comprehension. To his innocent child's mind, the whole issue begins when his mother is annoyed by his use of English when talking to her. But the viciousness of his father is inexplicable to him. By acting out his frustration on his child, this man succeeds only in undermining the already unhealthy parent-child relationship which haunts his family. As the narrator points out elsewhere, 'I knew father only as the character who occasionally screwed mother and who paid the rent and beat me up' (77). This man is more of a ghost than a father because he has no meaningful

relationship with his child: on the rare occasions that he is at home, he is a source of terror to his child. The underlying cause of all the violence is his attempt to re-assert his brittle and mistaken sense of masculinity which has been systematically eroded by colonialism. To Marechera's mind, this sort of hypocrisy is a great social danger in that it poisons the harmony of family relationships and by extension, society as a whole. Children who grow up surrounded by such mindless violence tend to be conditioned into taking violence as an accepted form of social conduct.

One of the phenomena that Marechera finds important to analyse is male sexual violence against women. In 'House of Hunger', Peter goes to absurd lengths in an effort to humiliate Immaculate sexually. The narrator, who is Peter's younger brother, returns home on one occasion to find Peter 'screwing her underneath the table' (27). Embarrassed, he wants to leave the house, but Peter insists that he sit down: 'This is home, man' (27). Meantime, Immaculate is 'still pinned under him' (28). Marechera deliberately portrays Peter as a grossly exhibitionistic character as a way of illustrating that at the core of such individuals' psyche, there is a desire to be seen to be exercising power. And in their parlance, power lies in one's ability to degrade other people, preferably in a public fashion, so that the world can actually witness their perceived grandeur. Thus, Peter flaunts his sexual prowess because his younger brother is present. As the narrator proceeds to say, Peter 'removed the blanket that covered them' (28). Even if a natural desire may have initiated the act, Peter's way of turning it into a display for his brother's delectation makes even this supposedly intimate act a display of Peter's false consciousness.

Through Peter's histrionics, Marechera portrays the subtlety of the hypocrisy underlying oppressed men's sexual violence. Such men are so psychically devastated by colonial tyranny that they believe there is heroism in sexually humiliating women. Mimicry is used to demonstrate the crudity and the distorted nature of such men's thinking. His narrator thus uses words like 'screwing' and 'pinned' because they convey macho images - if anything, that is how people with mindsets like Peter's would like to be regarded. Marechera believes this is fallacious logic: the sexual brutalisation of women can only serve to exacerbate their colonial burden in the sense that they are already fellow victims of colonial oppression. Here Marechera indicts patriarchy because, as he says, it 'has never conceded to women even the breadcrumbs of personality and intelligence' (*Source*, 355).

To Marechera, institutionalised mindsets are largely responsible for the kind of male sexual violence that is depicted in 'House of Hunger'. He believes that if men do not liberate themselves from the fetters of institutions like patriarchy, it can be very difficult to break the cycle of sexual violence, because of the tendency which he notices in human society to accept abuses as a norm because they have been habitually perpetrated, implying that they are culturally acceptable. Marechera urges readers to look critically at every cultural legacy and jettison those aspects that are lopsided. He recognises that - as Pushkin says in *Eugene Onegin* - 'Custom is despot of mankind' (46). In the following incident, nobody intervenes whilst a man publicly molests his wife. The narrator, who is from the same community himself, recounts the incident as follows:

The most lively of them [wife-beatings] ended with the husband actually fucking - raping his wife right there in the thick of the excited crowd...And he seemed to screw her forever...on and on until she looked like death. When at last - the crowd licked its lips and swallowed...he pulled his penis out...she seemed to move a finger, which made us all wonder how she could have survived such a determined assault.

(*The House of Hunger*, 50)

Marechera uses the above incident to illustrate the usually unnoticed collective culpability of people living in brutalised societies. As Annie Gagliano says: 'the entire community collaborates in this tissue of posturings as it mirrors their own impotence and ways of disguising the knowledge of degradation from themselves' (260-1). Here, we have Peter's psychic twin brother: he is putting up a public performance to show the world that he has power. And there is no attempt by any of the onlookers to rescue the woman who seems in danger of being broken through sexual violation. Instead people 'lick their lips and swallow' to suggest that they regard the event as sexually exciting. By folding their arms in the face of such an outrage, the public send the wrong signal to potential woman abusers. Rather than stopping this man in his tracks, they cushion him from the responsibility of tackling the fundamental cause of his humiliation : colonial oppression. In this way (Marechera believes) the cultures of male violence and hypocrisy are given fertile ground on which to blossom. Although the act may be individual, the presence and role of the 'audience' indicate the far larger, socially endemic nature of the sickness. In *The House of The Dead* Dostoyevsky says: 'A

society which can look upon such a phenomenon with indifference is already contaminated to its foundations' (242).

Marechera's strategy of using a narrator who is an insider of the community he is examining is an effective technique: he creates a distinction between himself - the writer - and the persona he creates in the form of the narrator. Because this community has lost its moral equilibrium, it is appropriate that the narrator should be an insider. His outrageous language, tone and attitude all testify to the moral turpitude of his society. Indeed, as Marechera says: 'Language is indissolubly connected with what it is that constitutes humanity in human beings and also, of course, with inhumanity' (*Source*, 4). If one imagines the mindsets of the crowd described above, one cannot be shocked by the language and attitude of Marechera's narrator – the reality that is portrayed is the truly shocking phenomenon.

By making the above incident a public spectacle, Marechera shows how a society creates its own Frankenstein's monsters. It is no wonder that later on Nestar's son, Leslie, grows up into a callous thug and rapist. He replicates the violence displayed by the man who publicly degrades his wife when he later molests Philip's sister. In the words of the narrator (also Philip's friend), 'He beat her up and screwed her whilst she was unconscious' (*The House of Hunger*, 53). When a society openly shows that male sexual violence is an accepted norm, it conditions children into celebrating callousness. In other words, Marechera challenges the perception that violence is inherent in human nature - he depicts its preponderance in 'House of Hunger' as a manifestation of the tendency of a degraded society to foster pernicious forms of insincerity. These are hypocritical, 'strong' disguises of a condition of underlying impotence.

The depiction of male violence in 'House of Hunger' should not be seen as a glamorisation of gratuitous violence. Rather than an 'adolescent' attempt to shock the bourgeois reader, it is a strategy by which people's attention is directed to the psychological motivations underlying disempowered men's violent attitudes. It is in this sense that the insights from Marechera's writings can benefit a society that faces poverty-related crimes and forms of brutality such as the abuse of women and children, that result from chronic insecurity.

Conclusion.

The aim of this thesis has been to show that in Marechera's analysis of the workings of hypocrisy, there are no sacred cows. I have argued that the quest for freedom of thought and expression pervades his writings: he is keenly conscious of the fact that such freedom is constantly threatened by the ubiquitous forces of tyranny that operate in multifarious guises. He perceives these guises as ranging from overt, institutionalised structures of power to covert forms of mind manipulation such as religion, 'culture' and tradition. Marechera cautions readers that the tendency to accept established lines of thought at face value renders one vulnerable to abuse by self-serving hypocrites who often use hegemonic discourses to insinuate their way into the collective psyche.

Coming as sequels to Europe's Age of Reason, the European colonial pogrom in Africa and the rampant plunder of the continent's resources, European claims to civilisation are shown to be hollow. Similarly, Africans cannot presume a higher moral ground on the basis of their having been victims of European colonial brutality: the proliferation of petty tyrants in post-independence Africa (thanks to the OAU's tacit approval) shows that Africans are no strangers to the phenomenon of power abuse. And the thriving of patriarchal legacies exposes the selective morality of Africans. Gerald Gaylard's view is that Marechera indicates the extent to which 'our own internal repressive belief systems must change alongside the overthrow of external repressive systems' (1993: 114).

Missionaries are portrayed in this thesis as villains with little to show for their claims to being primarily concerned with spreading the Word of God. If anything, they were forerunners of European colonisation because of their active role in manipulating the minds of African people – a potent strategy that significantly weakened African resistance to European imperialism...

By iconoclastically castigating the African image, Marechera seeks to expose the lack of coherent revolutionary theory behind slogans such as 'Black is beautiful'. Such populist rhetoric has tended to warp popular vision into seeing nothing beyond the removal of white people from political power. Crippled by inadequate vision, post-independence African bureaucracies frequently turn out to be neo-colonialist in their conduct, neither

willing to work towards nor capable of effecting fundamental socio-economic transformation. Like the bishop (Muzorewa) in *The Black Insider*, such leaders ask their disgruntled citizens: 'What are you worrying about? I am black and you are black' (39). The masses gradually realise that the revolution they were called upon to sacrifice themselves for has only ushered in 'more snow and ice than ever before' (*Black Sunlight*, 66). In other words, to the masses, life after the revolution is 'still the same old ox-wagon of the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer' (*Mindblast*, 38).

Nationalist critics vilify Marechera for being 'un-African' because of his use of 'European' literary devices. This thesis has shown that such attacks are frivolous, diversionary antics used by people who have skeletons in their cupboards. As Abdulrazak Gurnah suggests: 'It is a familiar argument... the device of making the offending writer treacherous to a collectivity as well as to him/herself' (*Essays on African Writing 2*, 103). Marechera's detractors harp on his narrative style but maintain a deafening silence over the crucial issues that he raises, such as the black-on-black tyranny which is exemplified by the Amin and Bokassa regimes, as well as the prevalence of patriarchal abuses. Marechera's exposure of such social ills is an attempt to urge fellow Africans to be more self-reflexive rather than ascribe all social problems to European colonialism. In 'Out of the Shadows' Maya Jaggi quotes Noam Chomsky's description of Edward Said: 'His scholarly work has been devoted to ... reshaping our perceptions of what the world is and what we are... nothing is harder than looking into the mirror' (*Mail and Guardian*, 17 September 1999: 19). Similarly, Marechera is being vilified for urging fellow Africans to take a look at their reflection in the mirror.

This thesis has demonstrated that the insights from Marechera's writings can help readers to disabuse themselves of amorphous notions like racial, national and cultural identity – oppressive human fabrications which only serve the selfish interests of the Machiavellis who seek to control people through dichotomising discourses. Marechera's view is that humanity ought to learn from history which abounds with tragedies caused by the irrational privileging of one form of identity over others. European genocide in Africa, the Nazi holocaust, and the South African apartheid nightmare are tragedies that were caused by obsessions with narrow-minded notions of identity. Jaggi refers to Said as an individual who 'is suspicious of the rigid identity politics of drum-beating roots affirmation', [who sees] 'an inherent irreconcilability between intellectual belief and

passionate loyalty to tribe, sect and country' (*Mail and Guardian*, 17 September 1999:19). The same vision emanates from Marechera's works.

At an artistic level Marechera's distinctive and creative use of English (a second language to him) and his deliberate sabotage of its 'machines of grammar and the systems of syntax ... [in order] to write the way the mind expresses itself' (*Source*, 219) offers inspiration to the voices that are marginalised by literary conventions or covertly censored by publishers who pander to given ideological establishments. In this sense, some of his work can be seen as engagements in a battle with hypocrisy.

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